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Police and crowd control tactics left the scene, but residents near Capitol Hill protest zone contend with ongoing occupancy

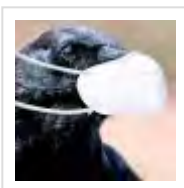

 Posted on **Thursday, June 18, 2020 - 9:18 am** by **Lena Friedman -- CHS Intern**


Residents living in apartment buildings in and around the Capitol Hill protest zone are voicing ongoing concerns about demonstrators staging in the area, and increasingly drawing a distinction between current occupancy and the protesting against police brutality and inequality that has take place in Seattle since the end of May.

In the midst of the standoff between protestors and police guarding the **East Precinct** that let up June 8, residents of buildings like 11th and Pine's [Sunset Electric Apartments](#) [expressed concern](#) about the harmful effects of police crowd control tactics being used. Although the weeklong standoff dissipated and "[Free Capitol Hill](#)" formed, residents in apartment complexes near the zone — like **12th Avenue Arts** and 12th and Pine's **Packard Building Apartments** — remain concerned.

One Packard resident, who has chosen to remain anonymous out of safety concerns, is leading efforts among 18 residents in the building to formulate a list of joint safety and security concerns to be sent to Mayor Durkan, Seattle City Council and other city department officials. According to the resident, residents in five of the other apartments in the building moved out in the past 48 hours because of these concerns.

A full letter from the group can be found at the end of this post.



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“People that are coming out here and participating, whether it was during the protests or during the occupation now, they have the option of opting in and opting out. They can choose when to come here and when to leave, and if they want to go home to their other neighborhood and have a good night’s rest, they get to choose that,” the resident told CHS. “We don’t get to choose how we participate in this and we have no say of what’s going on or any of the outcomes, and so I think there’s a growing frustration of uncertainty of what’s going to happen and how it’s directly impacting the permanent residents.”

The Packard tenant started a Google Group for residents to share information regarding conversations with protestors, safety and security concerns, issues with property management and logistical advice on how to break leases.

Free Capitol Hill pic.twitter.com/c9m1E84boO

— Mattie Washburn (@MattieWashburn) June 18, 2020

“I know that a lot of right-wing media has been portraying this in an absolute false, non-factual way, but also a lot of media has been painting this really rosy, perfect Kumbaya situation where it’s all peaceful and community and, while there’s a lot of merit and factuality to that, there’s a lot of stuff that’s been going on behind the scenes and around the clock, specifically in hours when there are not active rallies happening.”

Public safety concerns were heightened by incidents like last weekend’s [attempted arson in front of the East Precinct](#), he explained, as well as “arguments amongst different groups of occupiers down there that have escalated to the point where I’m afraid that it’s going to become violent.” The Packard resident also noted the disturbance of amplified music coming from the demonstration and continuing on into the night, but said this has eased up as much of the protest activity migrates west down Pine toward Cal Anderson Park.

According to the resident, safety concerns have been met to a degree: Access to the Packard Building, which directly faces the East Precinct, was eased when the Seattle Department of Transportation [rearranged the area on Tuesday](#) and set up a new traffic lane — though the move has rankled some inside the camp and pushed an increased amount of demonstration activity into **Cal Anderson Park**.

“What we have now is a million times better than being occupied by the police and the National Guard,” the Packard resident said. “That was an absolutely terrifying experience that we’re still experiencing trauma and anxiety from.”

Residents of 12th Ave Arts, a Community Roots Housing property, echoed this sentiment in a “Statement of Support.” The end of the letter reads:

Since the police abandoned the East Precinct, we feel safe. We no longer have tear gas coming into our building, nor are we kept up all night by hundreds of flash grenades and the screams of people trying to escape them. Since the police left, things have been peaceful. We can only conclude that the police were the problem. Rather than keeping the peace, they perpetrated violence. We’re glad they are gone.

Our residents remain rattled by this experience. We’ve been struggling to sleep. Our kids are traumatized and our pets are sick. Residents have suffered increased anxiety, high blood pressure, and respiration complications as a result of the SPD’s excessive use of force.

We are grateful that police violence in our neighborhood has ended, and we now hope to work with the organizers and other community members to address the following:

- Ensure our residents continue to have safe access to their homes
- Ensure health workers and emergency responders have safe access to our building
- Promote reasonable noise levels at night to help us recover from the ordeal of police occupation.

"To the organizers and demonstrators working to end systemic racism and militarized policing, we stand with you," the letter concludes. "We look forward to working with you as the demonstrations continue to unfold."

Occupation of the Capitol Hill protest zone remains a contentious issue in and outside the camp, as lines are delineated by some between these demonstrators and those protesting in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and against police brutality over the past few weeks.

"90% of residents and business in our portfolio are not for occupation. 99% is fully supportive of protests and police reform," a person involved with property in the area, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, told CHS. "But Residents and tenants don't feel safe at all from about 10:00PM one at night. It's a warzone feel in the wee hours – it's pretty crazy."

[@MayorJenny](#) [@cmkshama](#) [@SeattlePD](#) this guy just drove into Cal-Anderson park and started shooting arrows at his car. As a neighbor of the park I can confirm that you've completely failed at your job. I get that you're trying to setup [#BLM](#) to fail but seriously. [#CHOP](#) [#Seattle](#) pic.twitter.com/w7jfrwRejm

— Jacob Boysen (@jacobsworld) [June 18, 2020](#)



Organizers and communities around the camp are also responding to concerns that the occupation effort has strayed from the early Black Lives Matter goals. Friday, activists are dedicating Juneteenth Friday to a ["Blackout at the Chop" event](#) to "center black healing and community" in an area that sometimes feels more like **Capitol Hill Block Party** than a demonstration:

We're blacking out CHOP...the viral death of black bodies was the catalyst for this current movement and we need to make sure we remain focused. This means both policy and systemic change to our systems and healing space for black people.

A full letter from the Packard building resident group is below:

Dear Mayor Durkan, Seattle City Council and City Leaders,

This letter is sent to you on behalf of a collective of residents of the Packard Building Apartments at 1530 12th Avenue, direct neighbors to the Seattle PD East Precinct. We proudly stand with the courageous and resilient community members that protest and condemn the murders of black and brown people at the hands of police, white supremacy and the systems and institutions perpetuating racism.

We resided behind police barricades from May 31 to June 8, while our homes were surrounded by hundreds of armed Seattle PD, King County Sheriffs, SWAT, Washington State Patrol, National Guard and even the occasional King County Transit Police, Sound Transit Police, and the Bellevue Police Department – all while police helicopters constantly circled above. These forces arrived in militarized vehicles and occupied our streets causing terror and trauma to everyone around them. These individuals were heavily armed and required us to prove residency to enter our homes, followed us to our doors and on many occasions harassed residents for being outside or walking their dogs. There was never any direct communication with residents or property owners/managers about this violent occupation of our streets and the limitations of our existence around our homes.

We watched our friends, neighbors and community be assaulted by police using tear gas, flash bang grenades, rubber bullets, pepper spray and brute force as their cries filled the nighttime air. We were subject to being tear gassed inside of our homes on four different occasions, causing a range of symptoms from respiratory complications, coughing, burning of the mouth, nose, throat and eyes, and affecting pets that experienced seizures and wheezing. We stood in disbelief as we regularly watched Seattle PD snipers on the East Precinct roof aiming their rifles down at the crowd of protesters. We lost confidence in the police department, its leadership and frankly, the leadership that you as Mayor failed to show as your citizens were attacked. The Seattle PD should be held accountable for their actions.

We felt a strong sense of increased safety as the police forces abandoned the East Precinct and our streets. Since then, the well-intentioned creation CHOP has provoked inspiring community conversations, innovative protest strategies and a thorough list of organized demands focused on community-based ideals that support healthy, equitable communities. Along with the positive initiatives happening comes continued disruption and frustration for our residents. We have been denied access to our driveway, our building has been vandalized, we've witnessed attempted arson and escalated incidences of confrontation outside of our windows, have experienced amplified music and partying throughout the night and consistently have thousands of people congregating in the streets without masks during a global pandemic. We have received no information or engagement from the City or property management, Equity Residential. In the past 48 hours, five residents have moved out and more are making their plans to relocate due to the uncertainty.

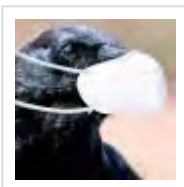
We are thankful that the violent occupation of our street by police has ended, but we have legitimate concerns about safety and security as permanent residents within the occupied zone, especially given that organizers' demands have not been met and resolution isn't within sight. We echo other residents in the area at requesting solutions to the current situation including:

1. Safe and unrestricted access to our homes and driveways
2. Guaranteed access for emergency responders, caretakers, guests and delivery services
3. Reasonable noise levels, especially after dark and within areas of residential homes
4. Protocol in place for public health and sanitation, specifically COVID-19 mitigation measures
5. Direct communication to property residents and managers on planned changes to the area

We support this critical moment in our history and proudly chant Black Lives Matter in the streets and from our rooftop. We hope to find common ground so that we too can be ready to continue fighting alongside organizers.

Respectfully,

A collective of residents at Packard Building Apartments



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More arrests overnight on Capitol Hill as new battle lines form between protesters and police

Thursday, July 2, 2020 - 9:20 am
In "News, etc."

Post-CHOP protests and arrests continue for second night on Capitol Hill —
UPDATE: 12th and E Pine reopened

Friday, July 3, 2020 - 9:01 am
In "News, etc."

Spokesperson: Mayor's office meeting with Capitol Hill protest camp to address 'significant nighttime public safety concerns and issues' — UPDATE

Monday, June 22, 2020 - 12:14 pm
In "News, etc."

This entry was posted in [News, etc.](#) and tagged [12th ave](#), [CHAZ](#), [chop](#), [pike pine](#), [protests](#) by [Lena Friedman -- CHS Intern](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#) [<https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2020/06/police-and-crowd-control-tactics-left-the-scene-but-residents-near-capitol-hill-protest-zone-contend-with-ongoing-occupancy/>]